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Title

Internationalising the Curriculum of International Relations

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Abstract

During the past few years, there has been a gradual but steady transformation of the student body of all UK Universities. Many non-UK students have chosen to study for an undergraduate degree in International Relations. This increasing number is added to the large number of exchange students from every corner of the globe who selected to spend a semester or a year at a British Higher Education Institution. The main argument this article puts forward is that these developments highlight the need to make the curriculum more inclusive for practical and for educational reasons. In doing so, it examines the concept of 'internationalisation' and explores key challenges and issues regarding internationalisation and inclusive curriculum. The article concludes by laying out ideas for about internationalizing the International Relations curriculum at Keele.

Keywords

internationalisation, curriculum, social sciences, international relations

The Challenge of Internationalisation: What is Internationalisation?

Internationalisation should be perceived as a process and not simply as an end. One of the most commonly accepted definitions of internationalisation is 'the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education' (Knight 2003: 2).

Not surprisingly, discourse on internationalisation of the Higher Education has generated false assumptions around the concept. According to Jane Knight, we can summarise these false assumptions in five commonly believed myths: (i) foreign students will produce more institutional internationalisation; (ii) the international reputation a university is a proxy for quality; (iii) the international institutional agreements as prestigious and attractive to students; (iv) international accreditation translated into a more internationalised institution; (v) the purpose of internationalisation is the global branding of the institution (Knight 2011: 14-15).

According to Philip Altbach and Jane Knight the main motivation for internationalization of Higher Educations are the commercial advantage, the knowledge and language acquisition and the enhancement of the curriculum with international content. (Altbach and Knight 2007).

Same as all popularised notions that tend to become a buzzword, internationalisation is at hazard to lose its true meaning. Brandenburg and de Wit forewarn that apparently there is 'a trend to move from substance to form, and that the popularity of this might lead to a devaluation of what internationalisation means and implies' (Brandenburg and de Wit 2011: 15-17). Brandenburg and de Wit argue that there is a need to establish a common commitment at both institutional and personal level to internationalization (ibid 17).

Why is it important?

First and foremost, it is an essential requirement for improving student's learning and achievement for the culturally, socially and educationally diverse student body. Therefore, internationalisation of the curriculum is rooted in the pursuit of pedagogical goals for both home and overseas students.

Today's competitive global market has significantly transformed graduate employability by raising the bar of expectations

and requirements that employers are asking (Henard et al 2012). Therefore internationalising home students would expose them to international perspectives and would equip them with awareness of a global culture. In other words, the internationalisation of the curriculum and globally-focused experience for stay-home students would be an asset for their future career prospects (Jackson and Huddart 2010). Also, an increasing number of research projects undertaken in this field report a direct connection between international experience and graduate employability (Crossmen and Clarke 2010). Therefore, the process of internationalisation of Higher Education is extremely beneficial for both home and international students' graduate employability. An internationalised curriculum supports 'the development of cultural sensitivity and adaptability as well as enhancing graduate attractiveness in a globalised and internationalised labour market, all key factors in determining individual employability' (ibid).

In order that all students benefit from the internationalisation of the curriculum, it is this authors opinion that educational leaders should take certain initiatives rather than expecting that the internationalisation will provide equal profits to everyone. Leask and Carroll identify three strategic interventions in order to improve inclusion and engagement of the students: The first is the alignment of the formal and informal curricula. The improved interactions between home and international students are dependent on the way educators use both the formal and the informal curricula to encourage and reward intercultural engagement (Leask 2009). The second is the focus on task design and management while the third concerns the need for new approaches to professional development of academic staff (Leask and Carroll 2011). Leask and Carroll conclude that reflective practice of the effectiveness of interventions is needed as well.

There is a growing amount of scholarly literature that draws attention to the threats that internationalisation of the Higher Educations carries out. The argument that is put forward is that the needs of the culturally diverse student cohort lower the academic standards of the Universities in a way that an inclusive teaching simply aims at the lowest common denominator. However, without omitting the challenges that this process poses scholars engaged with the issue of internationalisation urge to shift the focus of our perspective. Therefore, international students should not be regarded as 'problems' to be solved but as 'assets' to internationalisation and the generation of new knowledge and new ways of working in the academy (Ryan 2011).

In addition, the integration of experiential learning into the curriculum

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can lead to the increase of student engagement that facilitates the enhancement of core graduate skills on communication and critical reflection (Harrison 2011).

It is also important for the Higher Education institution as well. According to a recent study commissioned for the OECD, internationalisation is beneficial for the higher education institutions in six ways: (i) “increases national and international visibility; (ii) leverages institutional strengths through strategic partnerships; (iii) enlarges the academic community within which to benchmark their activities; (iv) mobilised internal intellectual resources; (v) adds important, contemporary learning outcomes to student experience; and (vi) develops stronger research groups” (Henard et al 2012).

What exactly does it involve?

Keele University has committed to ‘provide the highest quality student experience to a diverse student body’ (Keele University 2011). Keele University has acknowledged the importance of internationalisation recently has outlined the University Internationalisation Strategy for 2013 – 2015 (Keele University 2013).

The Internationalisation Strategic Map 2013 – 2015 includes inter alia (Higher Education Academy 2014a):

- To embed internationalisation within all aspects of the University’s activities
- Where appropriate to underpin our teaching and learning activities with the broadest range of international comparisons, case studies, benchmarks and “world views”
- To promote international, sustainability and interdisciplinary perspectives in every student’s programme of study (a shared aim with our L&T Strategy).
- To raise our profile and enhance our reputation in key International arenas
- To proactively engage with Keele Alumni across the globe to effectively support institutional development through enhanced profile, recruitment activities, international buddying and fundraising
- Proactively promote the benefit and opportunity to learn foreign languages
- To ensure consideration of internationalisation in our policy and decision making.
- To increase the number of international students taught on-campus to c. 2,000 (i.e 20% of the total student population)
- To diversify the geographical spread of our international student body
- To proactively manage the distribution of international students

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across our programmes.

- To develop programmes that meet the needs of international markets at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.
- To develop an attractive Study Abroad programme that will attract significant incoming, (fee paying?) students
- To actively encourage the integration of international students both on and off-campus

Therefore, the recruitment of more international students is only one of the motivations behind the process of internationalisation. The others are the changing demands of the global market that dictate a new educational approach that will develop new competitive and employable skills for the university graduates.

Dealing with the problem

While it is often considered that the academic discipline of International Relations is by definition more ‘internationalised’ than others (Higher Education Academy 2014), this is not necessarily the case in reality. Unfortunately, though International Relations programmes increasingly attract a wide range of international students, their content cannot always arguably be described as inclusive. Indeed, though the discipline has recently witnessed a recruitment boom from international students it has importantly failed to address the issue of internationalisation of the curriculum (Harrison and Saez 2009).

There are some practical obstacles in any attempt to internationalise the content of modules in the International Relations field. The culturally diverse student cohorts that usually undertake these modules require the creation of the most inclusive learning environment possible for each student. In doing so, there should always be clear structure of the content and better alignment the Intended Learning Outcomes with the means of assessment.

The attempts to build an inclusive curriculum face challenges that modules in Social Sciences often confront (Higher Education Academy 2014b). Key themes and topics that of modules offered from International Relations programmes and the subfields of international theory, security studies, international political economy, international history examine could easily fall in the category of ‘sensitive topics’. Issues such as terrorism, Middle Eastern conflict and global poverty often conceal cultural prejudices and stereotypes. In order to overcome this challenge, tutors could address assumptions on cultures by posing specific questions to students during the sessions. In doing so, the goal would always

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be the creation of a learning environment where all students could have an opportunity to engage in a discussion of these rather 'taboo' topics in a safe and open space. Therefore, while we could choose not to talk to the elephant in the room, it would be highly beneficial to address these issues in a mild way in order to engage all the students.

Recognising the significance of Kolb's experiential learning cycle (Kolb 1984), design of the content of these modules should aim towards generating a learning experience that would be inclusive for a cultural diverse student cohort. Nevertheless, a research project recently conducted recommended, among other points, to build in 'open' spaces for students to 'analyse and share their own learning experience and practice' (ibid). Still, the HEFCE's subject-specific quality assurance report for the Politics and International Relations acknowledges the 'discernible thrust' for 'internationalisation' of courses, and a related stress on interdisciplinary (The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2007: 2).

The content of the modules should be designed while taking into account the needs for building an internationalised and inclusive curriculum. According to HEFCE's report on the content of Politics and International Relations degrees:

"A single honours graduate in international relations will have experienced a curriculum which incorporates elements of international political theory and of international political analysis. A single honours programme in international relations generally aims to communicate the character of world politics from both the system and actor perspectives. It includes the historical evolution of international systems and of global power structures. The main foci in terms of agency are states and international organisations, and transnational actors." (ibid: 5)

One of the problems that tutors could face is the potential lack of coordination with other modules. As already outlined above, internationalisation is a very-long process that is far beyond the capacity of a single module or even programme. Therefore, a better coordination at the institutional and departmental level could facilitate the dynamics of the whole process. In addition, one other major practical issue is the bibliographical sources. There is relatively very little academic literature that would support a truly internationalised curriculum. Nevertheless, it can be costly to buy new textbooks, from the very few available in English language, if they would only be useful for a single module. Therefore, the institutional collaboration is crucial for resolving this practical difficulty.

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As in the rest of English Higher Education institutions, in Keele the forms of assessment are being chosen according to the HEFCE's benchmarks. According to HEFCE's benchmarks for Politics and International Relations the forms of assessment can include an appropriate balance of the following (ibid): essays, seen and unseen exams, book reviews, reports and dissertations; oral and written assignments; group and individual work; tutor-directed and student-directed tasks; work completed under controlled or time-constrained conditions and work completed in self-directed study time; tutor, peer and self-assessment.

Therefore, the combination of different types of assessment should take into account the needs of international students. For instance, performance in the tutorial sessions is not assessed for certain modules. This could be justified on the basis of two major concerns. First, it is imperative to create an inclusive and learning friendly environment for all the students. Because the vast majority of the international students are not native-English speakers, it is often observed that international students are more reluctant to participate in tutorial discussions. Therefore, by not assessing the tutorial performance it is more likely that more students would be willing to participate. The second reason could be more specific to the content of the particular modules examining issues classified as 'sensitive' especially in a diverse culturally student cohort. Therefore, by not assessing any of the tutorial performance and participation of the students, the potential of engagement more students in the discussions increase.

The evaluative framework

Being one of the most discussed issues in the 21st century Higher Education sector, the internationalisation agenda has forced Universities to develop and employ relevant strategic plans. Yet, this has not been reflected in the relevant academic literature. There is little being written on discipline-specific action plans (American Political Science Association, 2007).

For pursuing a truly internationalising objective, a holistic approach is essential to be adopted. After all 'internationalising curricula is not just about content, it also requires changes in pedagogy to encourage students to develop critical skills to understand forces shaping their discipline and challenge accepted viewpoints' (Zimitat 2008). Therefore, the dimension of internationalisation should infuse into all the key elements of the curriculum design and development: the learning outcomes, the content, the teaching and

learning methods and the assessment, learning resources.

The development of explicitly international learning outcomes related to internationalised content throughout the module/ programme is the starting point of the process. These outcomes should be effectively communicated to the students pointing out the advantages of global competence.

Being a deceitful idea for internationalising course content, especially for the discipline of the International Relations, by simply focusing on international case studies is insufficient. Though a good starting point, internationalising the curriculum of International Relations contains much more than simply including a few comparative or global case studies. In a rapidly increasing literature dealing with challenging dominant paradigms and established epistemologies, social sciences disciplines are accused of being developed upon Eurocentric knowledge (Wallerstein 1997). Accordingly a critical and revisionist literature is being developed in International Relations (see for example Hobson 2012). Truly internationalising the academic field of International relations requires not only a fundamental review of ontological and epistemological paradigms but also the production of knowledge within social sciences. Students should be able to acknowledge differences in conceptual approaches and relate issues in historical and political contexts. Therefore, inclusive non-Eurocentric and non-ethnocentric perspectives should be encouraged. A truly internationalised curriculum challenges hegemonic paradigms and encourages students to develop the creative and critical thinking.

The teaching and learning methods should also be harmonised along with the internationalisation aim. Creating an inclusive learning environment for a cultural diverse student body could be a challenge. In doing so, the first step would be the acquisition of awareness of the learning needs of the student cohort. Only after this awareness is established, then several techniques could be followed in order to engage all students (Scudamore 2013). Engaged students with the content of the module/programme and with each other are more likely to critically assess their own assumptions, attitudes, and beliefs (Bond 2003: 10). Experimental learning methods, such as group work, case-studies, presentations and simulations can prove very valuable for achieving internalising goals.

Accordingly, the means of assessment should be carefully designated for the achievement of international and intercultural learning outcomes. Students should be encouraged to both reflect upon their culture and engage with the other students. Recommended

reading should be selected from a diverse authorship. They should unequivocally stimulate the development of global perspectives.

The internationalisation process should incorporate also the informal curriculum. It is also of paramount importance that the total student experience is enriched with extracurricular activities that entail international and intercultural interactions. These activities should focus on the development of international and intercultural skills.

The following table (table 1) provides an indicative account for developing an internationalised curriculum. Still, the list given in the table below is certainly not exhaustive.

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Table 1: Internationalising International Relations Curriculum

Key aspects of the Curriculum	Ideas for Internationalisation
Learning Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing clearly defined internationally-focused learning outcomes.• Addressing intercultural learning as an outcome.• Encouraging global perspectives.• Reflecting international expectations.
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Framing Content within a larger global context.• Integrating cross-cultural perspectives.• Encouraging global perspectives.• Exposing students to non-Western / non-Western-centric scholarship.• Challenging Hegemonic Paradigms and Practices.
Teaching and Learning Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Applying student-centred learning activities while acknowledging the various learning styles and traditions of education.• Developing cultural awareness and avoiding the cultural stereotyping• Using Experimental learning techniques: use group work to promote the sharing of multiple views of knowledge creation.• Providing Constructive feedback to assist students in developing international knowledge, skills and perspectives.• Encouraging students to use examples from their own experiences.• Applying various teaching techniques to increase inclusiveness of the learning environment.

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Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reinforcing the importance of a global perspective by including questions and tasks that require students to draw upon.• Using multiple forms of assessment.• Encouraging reflection of students' cultural perspective and engage with others on specific issues.
Learning Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internationalised recommended reading list representing diverse perspectives.• Recommended reading material form a wide range of texts, journals and web based resources.• Expose students to non-Western / non-Western-centric scholarship.• Exploring technology to supplement and facilitate learning, teaching and assessment activities (e.g. recording lectures).
The Informal Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encouraging global-orientated extra-curricular activities.• Encouraging collaboration of the diverse student cohorts.• Promoting Academic mobility / exchange programmes.

Conclusion

This article has highlighted the need for creating an inclusive content for a diverse student body. There are a number of steps to take for successfully dealing with the process of internationalisation of the Higher Education sector. An internationalized curriculum would ensure that all students were exposed to international perspectives and allow building of global competence. Learning outcomes, goals and assessment should also explicitly include Internationally-focused competencies in diverse student cohorts. Nevertheless, internationalisation is a long, multi-contextual and multi-dimensional process and there are certainly many areas that need to be explored and reflected further.

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ARTICLE | #3

Title

Teaching and Learning reflection from the perspective of a programme technician on the MPharm course within the School of Pharmacy at Keele University

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Introduction

The following is a reflective review of my role as a Pharmacy Programme Technician within the School of Pharmacy at Keele University. The reflection was originally written as part of a portfolio for the PG Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (THLEP) programme whilst I was employed in a technical support role specialising in areas of pharmacy practice and dispensing. TLHEP is primarily designed for academic members of staff but I undertook the course because some of the roles that I carried out crossed into teaching and learning support rather than being purely 'technical'. Alongside TLHEP, I was also completing a Masters in Professional Studies in Education at Manchester Metropolitan University. As a qualified teacher of Business and Information Technology, for the 11-18 age, the Masters course allows me to compare and contrast the links between adult education and state education.

I became a qualified pharmacy technician in 1993 and have worked in community and hospital pharmacy until I decided to make a career move into education. One thing that became clear to me after working in Further Education was that I missed the pharmacy environment and yet I enjoyed working with students. Working for the School of Pharmacy has allowed me to combine my interest in pharmacy and education and after 5 years at Keele, I am now a Teaching Fellow in Pharmacy Practice.

The MPharm course at Keele University has continually evolved since the original work was written. Innovate teaching practices have been introduced and the course is currently being re-accredited with the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC). Changes to the curriculum and learning outcomes have been updated but many of the educational theories within the course and the reflective review still remain. It is hoped that the article will share some of the good practice that takes place within the School of Pharmacy and demonstrate how reflection can lead to the continual improvement of one's own professional development and an improvement to the teaching and learning practices for students.